

Society Review

Website: www.burysociety.com

Summer 2025

Abbey's design ideas



RFA Design suggest a central sculptural element in which Edmund is both present and absent. Image courtesy RFA Design.

The Abbey of St Edmund Project Board has recently reviewed two exciting reports for the development of the project into its final form. One is from RFA Design (Interpretation Planning Consultants) and the other from Purcell (Architectural Consultants).

The RFA Concept Report presents concept proposals for the interpreta-

tion of the Abbey of St Edmund as part of the project: The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn.

The proposals presented in this report are subject to review and discussion with the project partners and the Heritage Partnership. Following discussion and further development, they will provide the baseline for RFA to further develop the designs.

These concept proposals are rooted in the interpretation plan and discussion document developed by the Heritage Partnership and enhanced by RFA's own knowledge and experience.

They are underpinned by English Heritage's concept of the "virtuous

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Restoring town centre ‘historic gem’

Emmerson Critchley Ltd, specialist builders for period properties, has been busy restoring the Greggs building, in Abbeygate Street, in Bury St Edmunds town centre, and here they outline the work that has been carried out on the structure.

In the very heart of Abbeygate Street stands a familiar name - Greggs. Yet behind its modern signage lies a building steeped in history, its fabric telling tales of centuries past. When Emmerson Critchley Ltd were entrusted with the restoration of this iconic property, we quickly discovered that saving such a heritage gem would be far more complex than first met the eye.

From the outset, the project presented us with a fascinating blend of historic craftsmanship and unexpected structural challenges.

One of the earliest - and most curious - problems we encountered was severe water ingress from a down-pipe fitting that, quite simply, wasn't connected.

Instead of channelling rainwater safely away, it was sending streams directly into the building's structure, causing unseen damage behind the facade.

Even more surprisingly, we discovered a makeshift solution hidden out of sight: a plastic bucket acting as a hopper.

This bucket, split and poorly patched with expanding foam, was supposed to divert water away from the brickwork.

Instead, it was allowing water to penetrate the front facade, causing staining, damp patches and progressive deterioration.

Discoveries like these highlight the ingenuity, but also the perils, of improvised repairs in historic buildings. Further up the structure, we found that the OG guttering on the top elevation had sagged significantly in the centre.

Instead of efficiently draining rainwater, it was pooling water, contributing to further leaks and threatening the integrity of the decorative panelling below.

However, it was upon inspecting the



Work underway under the scaffolding surrounding the Greggs cafe-restaurant in Abbeygate Street, Bury St Edmunds.

roof that we realised the full extent of the building's distress.

It was riddled with failed box gutters and missing corner posts.

Several vital structural members, including tie beams and valley rafters, were entirely rotten.

This wasn't merely cosmetic damage - the primary roof timbers were so compromised that large sections of the building were beginning to implode inwards under their own weight.

Faced with such severe structural failures, our team worked meticulously to replace these critical timbers, carefully replicating original joinery details wherever possible. Preserving historic character while introducing robust modern interventions demanded both traditional craftsmanship and innovative engineering solutions.

Each section was assessed and re-built with sensitivity to the building's

heritage, ensuring that the original architecture and visual appeal were respected and retained.

Now, with its structural woes resolved, the building stands proud once again - a testament to the vision of its original builders and the dedication of those determined to save it for future generations.

Greggs may be a modern brand, but the bricks, beams and tiles above it are part of Bury St Edmunds' living history.

At Emmerson Critchley Ltd, we're honoured to have played a vital role in this building's story.

Projects like this remind us that historic restoration is more than just repairs - it's about breathing new life into the past while securing it for the future.

We're thrilled to see the Greggs building restored to its former glory, ready to serve the town for hundreds of years to come.

£120k grant for Abbey project

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circle”, where a visitor experience starts with enjoyment and develops to understanding and caring for a site. The sculptural element is a proposal for the central area of the new visitor centre, near the Cathedral, and these proposals will be included as part of a public consultation. In summary, they expect to be able to deliver the proposed concept scheme for the interpretation area with a digital experience plus development of a range of outdoor interpretive elements by drawing on several budget allocations. Purcell have been appointed by the project steering group as lead consultant to develop proposals for a new visitor centre, accessible pathways across the Abbey grounds and conservation repairs to the Abbey ruins and Norman Tower.

These have all been presented in a first

draft of a pre-application submission for the project. This very large document collates the partner proposals together in one place for the first time. It presents further refinement of the architectural concept design for the new visitor centre as a site for the interpretation of the Abbey, development of the improved pathway networks across the Abbey site, and further assessment for the conservation repairs to the Abbey ruins and Norman Tower.

This submission has already stimulated a range of reactions and Purcell will seek more consultation prior to submitting consent applications for the proposed works to all parts of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) funded capital works project.

Meanwhile, The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn has been awarded a grant of £120,000 by Benefact Trust.

The grant will help equip a learning discovery centre and a flexible community space, support an ambitious programme of community events and activities, and help create more opportunities for volunteers to become involved.

The Very Rev Joe Hawes, the Dean of St Edmundsbury, said: “This important and generous grant from Benefact Trust will make a huge difference to the project’s ability to reach out to all our communities. We will use the heritage and biodiversity of the Abbey area to help young people flourish and grow in confidence and self-esteem, to welcome and support individuals who feel they are living on the outside looking in, and to provide a safe and enjoyable place for those who are living with dementia and other mental health challenges.”

Alan Baxter

Young Trader Competition held in the town

The excitement continues to build for the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) Young Trader Competition after the successful local heat in Bury St Edmunds last month.

Traders aged between 16 to 30 from across East Anglia set up their products ready for the chance to compete. The stalls boasted a large variety of products, from tasty brownies to bespoke bookmarks, and handmade coasters to freshly made coffee.

Each trader competed in an array of categories and were evaluated against a range of criteria such as products, customer service and how they interacted with other participants.

The judging panel comprised of David Marjoram, as chair of Our Bury St Edmunds BID; Sue Warren, head of marketing at Our Bury St Edmunds BID and Bury St Edmunds and Beyond; and Nick Pandolfi, senior business advisor at the New Anglia Growth Hub.

The winners from local heats will then progress to the regional heat in Bury St Edmunds on Wednesday, July 30, and then advance to the national final



The Young Trader Competition winner Charlotte Smith, from Fox and Fauna, with judges Sue Warren, David Marjoram and Nick Pandolfi. Photo: West Suffolk Council.

in Stratford-upon-Avon to compete over the August Bank Holiday weekend. The winner of the local heat was Charlotte Smith, from Fox and Fauna.

The following traders achieved highly commended awards in the local heat: Georgia Bretnall, from

Bury Botany; Alyss Humphrys, from Moody Cow Crafts; Amber Henshaw, from Bratty Bat; and Alex Brentnall, from AB Cakes. The judges were amazed with the young entrepreneurs and their commitment to trading and developing their skills despite the hot weather.

Food and drink town tours



Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides, Our Bury St Edmunds BID and town centre businesses including Marimba have launched a new Food and Drink Tour for Bury St Edmunds – Suffolk’s Foodie Capital. Pictured left to right are Peta Levantis (Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides), Mike Dean (Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides), Adrian Tindall (Chairman of Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides), Louise Griffiths (Marimba store manager), Lynn Whitehead (Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides), Mark Cordell (CEO, Our Bury St Edmunds BID) and John Saunders (Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides). Photo: Phil Morley.

Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides have teamed up with businesses in the town centre to launch a new Food and Drink Tour in Suffolk’s “foodie capital”.

The guides have worked with Our Bury St Edmunds BID and BID member businesses on the new tour which launched on Thursday, June 26, and will run on selected Thursday afternoons during the summer from 2pm to 4.30pm.

Tour participants will enjoy a two and a half-hour food and drink themed tour of the town stopping off at six local businesses to try bite-sized samples of food and drink, hearing about the business and the local history of the building and location.

The tours seek to combine the reputation of Bury St Edmunds as the “foodie capital” of Suffolk, the popularity of the town’s guided tours and the quality of local produce and specialities available in the town.

The tour takes you through the heart of Bury St Edmunds, offering visitors a taste of the town and a chance to

discover Bury’s food and drink history including Cook’s Row, the Abbot’s feasts, and how a maltster almost destroyed the town.

Along the way, guests will enjoy bite-sized samples of food and drink and meet the people behind the town’s independent businesses.

Mark Cordell, CEO of Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District, said: “I am very proud of the reputation Bury St Edmunds has as the foodie capital of Suffolk and we already work closely with the fabulous tour guides, who provide a number of informative and enjoyable tours around our historical town. So, I thought, why not combine the two?

“My wife and I have enjoyed many a foodie tour whilst visiting towns and cities abroad and felt that the concept would work well here and I am delighted that the tour guides were happy to add this tour to their repertoire.

I am confident that the tours will become very popular and hopefully in due course their frequency and

the number of businesses taking part will increase.”

In the first instance the guides will work with six businesses in the town, and they hope to expand this to more businesses who wish to showcase their offer as the year progresses.

The first six are Procopio’s Pantry, Adnams, Nethergate Wines, Marimba, No5 Angel Hill and The Wine Cellar.

Adrian Tindall, the chairman of Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides, said: “We’re very excited to be working with Our Bury St Edmunds BID and its members to offer this first tasting tour of the town. We shall be sharing morsels of Bury’s fascinating gastronomic history, from its medieval marketplace to the fine dining of today, while stopping off to sample some of the culinary delights of Suffolk’s Foodie Capital.”

Tickets for the Bury St Edmunds Food and Drink Tour are £25. To book visit the Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides website: www.buryst-edmundstourguides.org

Preparing for floral judging



The floral locomotive in front of Bury St Edmunds train station. Photo courtesy Bury Free Press/Mark Westley.



As I write this, preparations are well underway for both our Anglia in Bloom and Britain in Bloom judging days; taking place within a week of each other, at the end of July and the first week in August.

This is our chance as a Large Town to keep Bury St Edmunds firmly on the map as one of the best, if not THE best, floral town in the country.

Our main focus this year has been on the theme of 200 Years of Rail Travel – so with thanks to Hopkins Homes, our project sponsor, we have installed a floral locomotive in front of Bury St Edmunds train station.

This has been extremely well re-

ceived, and becomes our centre-piece for judging days. In other news, our new Pride in My Street awards is slowly gaining traction, with entrants submitting photos and videos of their best efforts in their street, via email, in order to win certificates and the potential to become the best improved street in Bury St Edmunds. Entrants will share a prize of £1,000 in Our Bury St Edmunds Gift Cards, thanks to our project sponsor, Greene King. For Bury in Bloom, our biggest sponsorship deals are gained through roundabouts, so it is important that these sites are maintained to an attractive standard. Unfortunately, in recent years, this maintenance has fallen short of our expectations and as such, we have lost a couple of major sponsors. This led to discussions with West Suffolk Council, the current maintenance provider, and the reluctant requirement to

go out to tender with third party contractors. However, despite this, West Suffolk Council felt it in their best interests to bid for the contract back with a more serious approach – offering to employ a member of staff designated to roundabout maintenance.

Internal discussions with Bury Society trustees, and various meetings with our treasurer, found favour with West Suffolk Council's new approach and agreed on a fresh contract for the new financial year. Funding to support this has been committed by Bury St Edmunds Town Council, to whom we are extremely thankful, so hopefully we will see a much brighter future for our town's roundabouts.

As I always say, none of this would be possible without our amazing volunteers and sponsors – so please wish us all luck for the weeks ahead.

Chris Wiley

Bury is ‘blooming’ and booming

Having just returned from a short break in Devon, and after visiting many local towns in the area, I can safely say that on returning home, Bury is flourishing.

I’ve seen a few boarded-up shopping streets, empty banks, derelict hotels and a general feeling of past “better days” whilst visiting some of the Devon towns.

Some are doing better than others, but in general, here in Bury, things look and feel a lot more prosperous. Chris Wiley, the Bury In Bloom team and West Suffolk Council have recently installed the hanging baskets throughout the centre, and with the support of Our Bury St Edmunds and the Bury Town Council, the town is looking its best.

A huge well done and thank you.

The Abbey Gardens are, as always, simply stunning, and again the team and volunteers have excelled.

It is always heartening to hear visitors’ comments and comparisons to their own towns and Bury usually comes out in the positive.

Also heartening, was the sight of thousands of walkers on the recent St Nicholas Hospice Summer Evening Walk, and the number of locals and visitors enjoying the Hidden Gardens event, always a special day on the local calendar.

St Edmundsbury Cathedral is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the completion of the Millennium Tower this summer, and as the first tour guide to take visitors up (once the long drawn out health and safety and insurance policies were completed) it is still amazing to climb the 202 stairs and look out over the town. Some locals want to see their house from 160ft up, whilst others enjoy the view over the Abbey ruins and gardens, a unique way to see Bury. A one-year anniversary has just passed on the opening of Primark. The store has had a huge positive effect on footfall in the town, as shoppers can now give Ipswich and Cambridge a miss and discover the huge variety of retailers and hospitality that Bury offers.

The arrival of Primark has also en-



St Edmundsbury Cathedral, which is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the completion of the Millennium Tower, looking over the Abbey Gardens.

couraged other businesses to invest in the town and Primark also attracts a younger shopper demographic which local businesses can tap into. The Arc Shopping Centre is full apart from a basement unit, and many of the currently empty shops in town are under offer to new businesses.

A new toy shop, beauty salon and Italian restaurant are some of the new arrivals.

Discussions and deals are always going on in the background and our 6.7 per cent vacancy rate in Bury is a fraction of the national rate at 14pc. Some local towns are as high as 22pc, so I would say we are booming.

The Spring Fayre, organised by Our Bury St Edmunds, saw huge crowds descend over the late May Bank Holiday and the weather was perfect, whilst the Literary Festival brings in more business to the shops, hotels and food and beverage sectors. It is exactly these sort of events that show Bury at its best and the buzz in town is infectious.

The “Foodie Town” offer continues to expand and again seeing the outdoor tables around the town adds to the continental feel and buzz.

We at the Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides have launched a “Food and Drink” tour to showcase the very best local products and introduce the

people behind the scenes to locals and visitors alike.

Bury is now nationally recognised for its food and beverage offer which again brings people into the town to spend money.

Also taking advantage of the summer evenings is the beloved Theatre Royal who, on the back of amazing feedback for their outdoor “A Christmas Carol” performances during Covid, are launching “Steve and Steff” in August, an outdoor interactive performance around the streets of the heart of Bury St Edmunds, again showcasing the historic and beautiful alongside a very modern love story.

As a Bury boy born and bred, I honestly think that our lovely Bury St Edmunds is constantly bucking national trends and should be seen as an example of a town that brings people together for the love of where they live, a “can do” attitude and above all a positive outlook that encourages business and progress whilst maintaining its history and beauty.

Most towns up and down the country lack that spirit and we lose it at our peril.

Enjoy the summer in Bury, its festivals and fayres, its culture and history that is all around you.

Stephen Moody

Dr Rae Fund boosting local projects

The Dr Rae Fund is the principal source available to the Society for making grants.

Dr Alison Rae was the deputy medical officer for Suffolk and lived in Bury St Edmunds.

Her generous bequest to be administered by the Bury Society was £86,181 “for local projects of creation or preservation”.

Equal sums were also bequeathed to the Town Trust and St Mary’s Church.

Careful investment has meant that since Dr Rae’s death in 1987, it has been possible to distribute over £130,000 and there is still over £35,000 remaining in the fund.

To date more than 30 projects have been supported with grants ranging from £20,000 to as little as £100.

Of note is £20,500 for trees and planting in the Cattle Market, £20,000 for restoration of the Unitarian Meeting House, £15,000 for the improvement of the St John’s Centre, £15,000 for a lift in the Cathedral for the disabled and £6,500 for the creation of the Pilgrims’ Herb Garden.

At the other end of the scale, there were grants of £100 for trees in the Gibraltar Woodland and £290 for an induction hearing loop in the



The 17th Century ‘Tryal of Witches’ on display at Moyse’s Hall Museum which has benefitted with a grant from the Dr Rae Fund of £1,500 matched by the Friends of the Museum. Image courtesy of Dan Clarke at Moyse’s Hall Museum.

Unitarian Meeting House. Recently the fund has provided £10,000 to the Guildhall to support heritage activities. The fund has provided a grant of £2,965 for replacement chains and mats for hanging baskets.

A grant of £1,000 is supporting the St Edmunds Catholic Church Heritage Vestments Project to assess, conserve and display these important items, the oldest in the town.

Moyse’s Hall Museum acquired the 17th Century “Tryal of Witches” with a grant of £1,500 matched by the Friends of the Museum.

The book describes the 1664 trial in the town, an important event which is thought to have inspired the Salem witch trials in the USA.

The Bury Society is a lead partner in the “The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn”; the fund has enabled us to make a grant of £10,000.

The Abbey Heritage Project is a multi-million pound collaborative initiative aimed at conserving and enhancing the historic Abbey of St Edmund ruins and surrounding area.

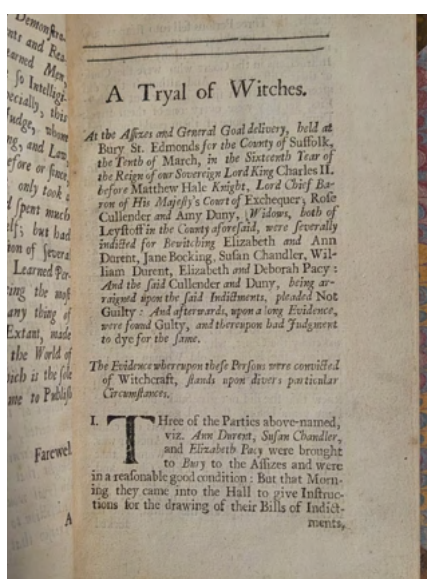
It will focus on conservation, interpretation and creating an improved visitor experience.

The Dr Rae Fund continues to be an important source of grants to enhance the environment in Bury St Edmunds and for heritage initiatives. For smaller items it can contribute

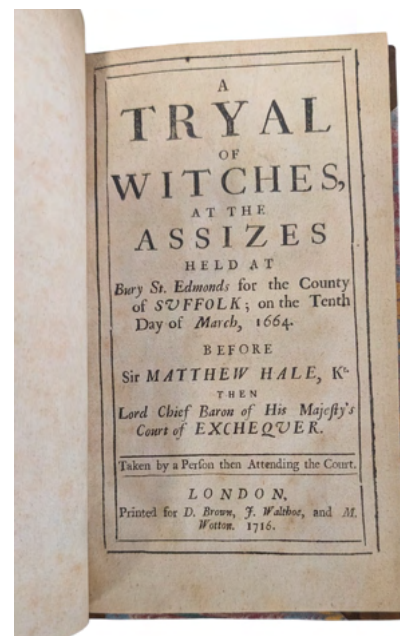
significantly though we usually look for match funding from other sources rather than supporting the full project cost. The fund also enables the society to have a significant role in larger projects.

If you feel you have a project which is worthy of support by the fund please get in touch with Terry O’Donoghue, the secretary and deputy chair of the Bury Society.

Ben Booth
Treasurer



A page from ‘A Tryal of Witches’ which is on display at Moyse’s Hall Museum. Image courtesy of Dan Clarke at Moyse’s Hall Museum.



The front page of ‘A Tryal of Witches’. Image courtesy of Dan Clarke at Moyse’s Hall Museum.

A full Guildhall for the Annual

Despite it being a very warm Thursday evening, between 60 and 70 members gathered for the Annual General Meeting of the Bury Society in the Guildhall on June 26.

Whilst officially the third AGM of the charity as a CIO, it actually marked 54 years of the Bury St Edmunds Society.

As tradition dictates, the members were greeted with a glass of wine or juice, followed by a 45 minute talk.

This year saw Terry O'Donoghue speak about the lesser known and more unusual gatherings in the Guildhall, all reflecting changing social attitudes, but most importantly the pre-eminence of the building as a meeting place for the townspeople in good times and bad.

The formal AGM that followed commenced with the chairman's summary of the activities of the charity over the last 12 months.

One of the battles lost during the year was the West Suffolk Archives office in Raingate Street.

Whilst fighting hard alongside various partner organisations in the



Members attending The Bury Society's Annual General Meeting at the Guildhall.

town, Suffolk County Council were unmoved by all the reasoned arguments to prevent local records being transferred to Ipswich.

On a positive note, Martyn Taylor listed the areas where our financial support via the Dr Rae fund and the smaller general fund had been able to provide seed funding to the "Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn" project – an ambitious project to improve the facilities and visitor experience within the abbey grounds and cathedral precincts.

A substantial sum has also been made available to the Guildhall to support future heritage projects. Smaller grants were made in the year to various organisations including Andrea Davey's coffee mornings and afternoon teas as part of the "Grow your Dough" fundraising for the St Nicholas Hospice.

The St Edmund Historical Society also benefitted from two small grants to preserve and display important church vestments, some dating back to the 1600s. At the conclusion of the chair's report, a vase was presented to Lynne Wright retiring Certificate of Merit co-ordinator, in recognition of her outstanding work over many years in supervising the Bury in

Bloom front garden judging.

As is now the custom, the society also recognises outstanding contributions to the architecture of the town and this year's Rod Rees Architectural Award was presented to the Bury

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Martyn Taylor and Lynne Wright, the retiring Certificate of Merit co-ordinator, who was presented with a vase in recognition of her work supervising the Bury in Bloom front garden judging.



Jonathan Lloyd accepts this year's Rod Rees Architectural Award from Martyn Taylor for the Bury Town Trust's work on the refurbishment of the South African war memorial.

General Meeting of Society

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Town Trust for their work on the refurbishment of the South African war memorial.

The certificate was accepted by Jonathan Lloyd on behalf of the trust. Following the chair's report, Ed Thuell, planning officer for the society, summarised the many planning applications scrutinised by the society over the year.

Ed highlighted the society's disappointment at the demolition of the Goodfellow's building, on Parkway, not so much for the demolition itself, but the loss of social housing in the town.

As for the future, the society will be heavily engaged in scrutinising the future plans for the many listed Greene King buildings once the brewery vacates to a purpose-built brewery on the edge of town.

Planning is a major element of the society's activities and Ed expressed his gratitude for the support of Peter Riddington to ensure the trustees were kept aware of the numerous important planning issues within the town.

Dr Ben Booth presented the treasurer's report, indicating a reasonably healthy position as shown in the accounts published in the Spring review.

Ben recorded his appreciation of the invaluable help of Sarah Nunn working on a day to day basis to maintain the society records.

The accounts were then formally adopted.

Robin Burnett presented the last of the reports on the work of Bury in Bloom and the considerable efforts of Chris Wiley as co-ordinator.

Robin reminded those present of Bury's entry in the Anglia in Bloom and Britain in Bloom competitions for which judging is imminent.

Robin was able to advise the members that we now have the services of Chris for many more hours a week due to the financial support provided by the Town Council.

The other many strands of Bury in Bloom are also very dependent on

the many local sponsors who continue to enthusiastically support the efforts of the society.

The AGM's formal business ended with the statutory election of trustees; happily there have been few changes over the 12 months, the only resignation being that of Jess Hughes due to the demands of her employment.

Changes will be coming to the make up of the trustees and advisers next year as Martyn Taylor, in his report, did advise the members that this coming year will be his 10th as chairman of the society and he intends to stand down at the AGM in 2026.

Martyn has done so much for the charity that his stepping down is no mere changing of the guard, but a challenge for whoever takes his place to maintain Martyn's high

standards and work ethic.

Martin Lightfoot, as part of the AOB element of the evening, requested permission to address the members on his efforts via a newly formed charity to preserve some vestiges of an archives or records office in the town. The new charity has registered their interest in the former records office as a "Community Asset" in an attempt to work with the county and local councils as well as local groups, to preferably preserve this purpose-built building or establish another location to provide a safe home for local records and, more importantly access for interested community groups and students from the wider West Suffolk. The society members will be kept informed as events unroll.

Terry O'Donoghue
Secretary

Cathedral to host St Edmund's Dinner



St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

The Bury Abbey Rotary has secured the venue of St Edmundsbury Cathedral for the St Edmund's Dinner on November 19.

This year's event promises to be the largest yet, with over 300 guests coming together to celebrate the town, Saint Edmund, and raise funds for local charities.

Guest speaker will be former BBC Radio Suffolk presenter Mark Murphy.

The evening will also include an auction and entertainment and the catering will be provided by the Newmarket-based Crown Caterers.

Each table accommodates 10 guests, priced at £85 per head, with a limited number of tables available for eight guests.

For more information contact us at stedmundsdinner@gmail.com

Melanie Lesser

Sheep and goats help to clear nettles



The Bury Water Meadows Group's fourth annual Wildlife Day held in the Abbey Gardens. Photo courtesy Chris Cross.

If you have been wandering in the water meadows recently you may have noticed some new additions to the local fauna.

In some of the areas where we work we use scythes to cut the grass, manage comfrey and control nettles, particularly in Crankles South where a regular scything programme over a number of years is showing good results as the nettles give way to a fine wildflower meadow.

However, in areas such as Ram Meadow and No Man's Meadows more radical action is required due to the large extent of the nettle growth. Here we are using another traditional agricultural method. With the assistance of a local

shepherd, sheep and goats have been introduced to the meadows.

The sheep will eat mechanically cut nettles and comfrey, whilst live nettles are also fair game for the goats. They are also characterful creatures in their own right and simply by their presence add an extra bucolic dimension to the locality.

Meanwhile, there was much activity in the Abbey Gardens at Bury Water Meadows Group's fourth annual Wildlife Day in May.

The culmination of months of hard work by a dedicated team of volunteers, it was wonderful to see the event going from strength to strength.

With a clever piece of redesign of the layout of the stalls, this year's

event had a real street-scene feel, one of the organisers likened it to a "mini-festival".

It saw visits by local school children who had fun going on safari to identify the multitude of tiny creatures that make the Abbey Gardens their home. They were then able to add artistic interpretations of their discoveries to a colourful and ever-expanding display of bunting which graced the fringes of the main tent.

Stallholders representing a range of local environmental groups arrived for visitors to engage with, whilst an impressive array of experts were on hand to present talks, or take visitors on walks, to learn about subjects ranging from birds, trees, water voles and the flowers of Bury's water meadows, to the magical damselflies and dragonflies: the "Jewels of the Air".

It was great to hear feedback from the stallholders telling us of the generally high level of interest in the town's wildlife that they encountered amongst visitors.

Our Wildlife Day is a fun event with a serious message, the natural beauty of which we are stewards is fragile and we can all play a part in preserving it for the school children of the future to enjoy.

Richard Counihan
Chair

Bury Water Meadows Group



Sheep and goats helping to clear the nettles in Ram Meadow and No Man's Meadows. Photo courtesy Julian Case.

Re-pointing of the Abbey wall

Spot the spelling mistake: not Muston Street!

From the corner of Cotton Lane to the Fox Inn widening of the road took place in 1926.

Ancient timber framed cottages opposite the north curtain wall of the Abbey were demolished though some reused in the rebuild of number 17. Previous to widening, the ancient Star Inn, a carriers inn closed in 1923, it also suffered demolition.

A strange anomaly is although traffic would flow more easily with the widening, somebody then decided to put in parking lay-bys, reducing the width to where the street was originally. The north wall of the Abbey was built by the sacrist of Abbot Anselm's (1121-48) and has the remnants of the Eastgate's chimney near to the Abbot's Bridge.

The Eastgate was the only gate under the control of the Abbey, the nearby River Lark very handy as an escape route if needed in times of trouble.

Currently this wall, the longest continuation of any remaining Abbey walls is shrouded in scaffolding under the auspices of English Heritage, the custodians of the Abbey of St Edmund.

How long it will be up for depends on how much re-pointing of the flint-work with lime mortar is required.



Mustow Street prior to it being widened in 1926.

The Department of the Environment (formerly ministry of Public Buildings and Works) was taken over in 1983 by a new agency, English Heritage.

It was around this changeover of responsibility for our past, 1984, that workmen cleaning down the north precinct wall of the abbey of

St Edmundsbury made a startling discovery.

Hidden amongst the flint and mortar was, quote "a curious doll."

Approximately 12cm/5ins high this small statuette is set in an arched niche made from either mortar or cement.

The doll, probably ceramic, is a female figure dressed in 18th century costume, petticoat and bonnet, and has its arms crossed clutching an open book.

The niche is 3m/10ft up high and there is the date on it of 1777 though this could be wrong due to the passage of time and the ravages of the seasons.

Curiously if this date of 1777 is correct it coincides with a date stone on a nearby house, 28 Mustow Street. This house was renovated in 1981 by the Town Trust.

Mercifully the high location of the ceramic doll is protecting it.

Now questions have to be asked, is this a genuine figurine from the past or a case of some wag playing games with us?



The Abbey wall with the ceramic doll inserted into the structure.

Martyn Taylor

Greene King plans still ongoing

After Greene King announced at the beginning of 2024 that they intended to move their brewery to new premises on the Moreton Hall Industrial Estate, along with their packaging and distribution activities, the concern of us all has been to ensure that if this truly is to be, then the town deserves the best result that can be achieved, acknowledging that Greene King are a commercial business and are bound to try and achieve the best result they can for their shareholders. Some of us had been critical of the brewer's reluctance to state what activities would stay at the Westgate site and until they had planning permission for their new premises they were reluctant to commit to anything. But with this secured they announced that they had appointed Turley Planning as their planning and heritage consultants and Allies and Morrison as their architects and master planners, both companies with good reputations.

And, Greene King did, as they had promised: start their stakeholder consultations in April and of course the Bury Society have been engaged with them on this.

Greene King held two evening presentations about their move which, to be honest, they are not themselves certain about, as they are to go through a "Master Plan Exercise"



Greene King's brewery facility in Westgate Street.

which will take into consideration the stakeholder sessions as an indication of the town's aspirations for the estate. To try and give the town a

single voice on this we met with all the other local amenity societies, from the Churchgate Area Association to the Water Meadows Group and from the Feoffment School to the Town Trust, to try and glean some idea of what their concerns were and to galvanise them into action as a group.

This was a very successful meeting, and it was agreed to work together with a team of "experts" to represent the wider community.

So we attended the stakeholder meeting and Greene King agreed that we should in addition get a better understanding of their building stock and the wider estate.

This took place with 12 of us in attendance on a very hot afternoon and I for one, at least, was surprised by quite how extensive Greene King's holdings are.

They not only own the brewery but also the land behind the Theatre Royal down to Cullum Road, with vast bottling and distribution buildings too.

To be honest, that we were only able to access the main brewery building did mean we still are somewhat at a disadvantage when trying to think of uses for the other buildings, but we are to meet as a group again in July when hopefully we'll be able to put some sensible suggestions to Greene King and their professional team.

Greene King have a programme to get some draft ideas together in the autumn and we intend to feed into that.

I'm sorry that this short piece can't give you really any more at this stage.

It truly does seem that Greene King themselves are still going through a process to try and create a plan that will leave some "legacy" for the town after 200 years but still seem not to know what of their company will remain in their current locations and what uses, otherwise, may replace those they will vacate.

Peter Riddington
Planning advisor
Bury Society

Chinese food expert at festival

An ambassador for Chinese cooking with numerous TV shows and cookery books to her name will make her first appearance at the Our Bury St Edmunds Food & Drink Festival over the August Bank Holiday, Sunday and Monday, August 24 and 25.

Ching-He Huang MBE has hosted "Chinese Food Made Easy" for the BBC as well as "Exploring China – A Culinary Adventure" with Ken Hom and participated in many other favourites including "Saturday Kitchen".

Ching will demonstrate her trademark "minimum fuss, maximum

flavour" ethos in the Chefs on Stage Cookery Theatre on Bank Holiday Monday.

She'll host three demonstrations with chefs from some of the town's most popular establishments also taking to the stage across the two day event.

Among those set to appear on the Sunday are festival veteran Zack Deakins who is chef-patron of 1921 on Angel Hill and the chefs from Churchgate Street's new fine dining restaurant Bellota.

Many other town centre businesses will be participating in the event either with a stall or on the stage.

Charity fundraising is celebrated



People attending the Bury Abbey Rotary Club's celebration evening at the Guildhall.

The Bury Abbey Rotary Club hosted a celebration evening at the Guildhall, coinciding with Volunteers Week, to honour their charity fundraising achievements during 2024/2025.

The club announced that they raised £60,000 with £35,000 generated from the Classic Car Show and £8,000 from an on-line auction.

The event was a gathering of club members, local businesses, and representatives from 42 charities that have benefitted from the club's contributions.

Sponsored by Ashtons Legal, the evening featured refreshments and provided a lively atmosphere for networking and collaboration. Nic Hardy, the President of Bury Abbey Rotary, expressed the club's unwavering commitment to make a positive impact in the community.

"We are excited to host a variety of fundraising events in the next 12 months, including the 2025 Classic Car Show, a golf day, a black-tie St Edmunds Day Dinner and an online auction in 2026," he said.

Alan Brown, the chair of Community Service, showcased images of the international projects supported by the Rotary Club, highlighting the significant impact of their efforts.

For those interested in supporting the Bury Abbey Rotary Club, or if you represent a charity with a project for consideration, the email buryabbey@rotary1080.org.uk

Melanie Lesser

Coffee Morning hailed a success



Bury Society members at the April Coffee Morning.

Bury Society members enjoyed another of our ever-popular Coffee Mornings in April at the United Reformed Church, with coffee, tea and a great selection of cakes provided by Stephen Moody, and an opportunity to connect with friends, neighbours and other members.

Bury Society chair, Martyn Taylor, prepared a display of photographs charting the history of Greene King brewery in the town ahead of their proposed move to Suffolk Park on the Moreton Hall Industrial Estate. He provided an update on current planning decisions and

Bury Society campaigns. These fantastic events would not be possible without the members of the Membership, Communications and Events committee and the team of dependable volunteers, who make everyone feel welcome and comfortable.

Our Coffee Mornings give members a chance to socialise and meet the Bury Society Trustees.

The next Coffee Morning will be held on Saturday, October 18, at 10.30am until noon, at the United Reformed Church (TBC).

Samuel Saloway-Cooke

History of the Railway Mission

The Railway Mission, a charity founded in 1881 to bring the Gospel to people working on the railways, nowadays is a Christian chaplaincy of specially trained people who offer friendship to anyone connected with the nation's railways.

Thousands of people were employed at one time on the railways and working on a Sunday precluded some of them from attending a church service.

In 1895, local railwaymen approached Mrs Arthur Ridley a widow of Hexham House, Northgate Street, about starting a Railway Mission in Bury St Edmunds.

She attended the Congregational Chapel, in Northgate Street, (at the corner of Looms Lane) and agreed to run services for the workers in a room in the stationmaster's house at the Northgate railway station from 1895.

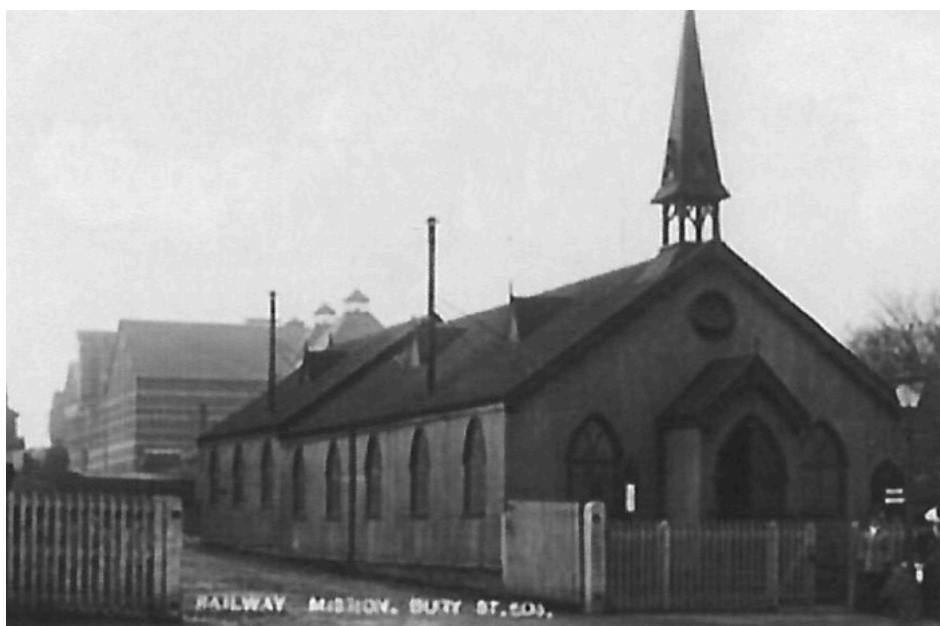
As the congregation grew, (perhaps exceptional preaching was the reason) it soon became clear that a new place of worship was required and consequently a fund was opened for this.

Obviously, any facility had to be close to the station, so the workers did not have to travel far.

A site was chosen in what was then Northgate Road, adjacent to architect Charles Russell's splendid railway bridge of 1846 and by 1900 sufficient monies had been accrued to proceed with the building of the Mission Hall.

A decision was made to dispense with a brick structure to save time and money as the funds were raised by the railway workers themselves. A pre-fabricated corrugated iron structure was purchased from Norwich firm Boulton and Paul in 1900. There were several companies nationwide then offering this type of what are known today as "tin tabernacles".

The Mission Hall has two light windows in a gothic design and small triangular dormers in both roof slopes. A contractor from London, W Hartrow, was employed for the



The Mission Hall, in Fornham Road, above, with the spire. Below, a more recent photo without the spire.



build: the total cost including fitting out was just over £317, a bargain. Sunday services soon commenced and a range of activities involving various groups were soon underway. Due to its popularity these services were extended, as was the building during 1903 with Mrs Ridley very much at the helm until she retired in 1916.

Always welcoming during the Second World War, even German POWs encamped at Fornham sang at the Mission Hall as a choir. In 1990 the Mission Hall was re-named Fornham Road Free Church and at this time still retained its origi-

nal open benches and raised pulpit. In 2001 it was purchased for £35,000 by the Seventh Day Adventists and refurbished; the work completed by May 2005 with the Bury Society making a substantial grant of £3,000. With a new coat of green paint on the exterior but no longer with its original turret this former mission hall is now Grade II listed.

On Saturday, May 31, this year, I was asked to attend the 125th anniversary of the Mission Hall on behalf of the Bury Society which I did and found the celebrations well attended.

Martyn Taylor

Planning themes and applications reviewed

In the world of planning applications throughout recent months we have seen a number of themes in respects of the types of applications we find ourselves reviewing and commenting on.

□ A number of applications in recent months have sought to dispose of original or traditional windows and detailing in favour of modern alternatives and stuck on glazing bars. Our view and that of most conservation and amenity organisations is that wherever possible traditional windows should be retained and repaired, especially in heritage settings. Without clear justification that a window is beyond serviceable repair it is hard to support its removal and a modest and sensitive repair will often be as cost effective.

It may feel like a small matter and the odd one here or there may appear inconsequential but over time the regular erosion of these details can markedly change the appearance of buildings and their townscape in a detrimental manner.

□ The increasing popularity of solar panels is encouraged but with listed buildings and conservation areas, the impact on heritage still takes precedent. A carefully placed array on a rear roof or in a discrete location is highly likely to be supported though. Applications for solar panels on front roof slopes or roofs in prominent positions will more likely than not be opposed.

□ Backland Development, which is the concept of new housing in in back gardens and other such spaces is an understandable wish for many. The Society have both supported and opposed these types of applications. The reality is it is very much judged on a case by case basis. But the same key considerations will always be considered. The Society's main considerations are usually impact on neighbours in respect of light and loss of amenity; the effect of extra traffic and the overall impact on

the setting of the local conservation area. Whilst maximising use of land is positive, over development is not.

□ We are particularly disappointed by the lack of affordable housing seen with new applications. National policy does make this tricky, as developments usually need to be over nine new dwellings but wherever possible we will push for its inclusion; to allow opportunities for all housing stock within the town centre and conservation areas.

□ Change of use particularly from commercial to residential has been an increasingly regular theme noticeably through the medieval gird. The principle of this is established through national permitted development rights but as we are dealing predominately with listed buildings extra consideration is always given and permission required. The challenge is the balance between ensuring buildings have a use and the loss of retail and commercial space. As it can lead to gradual or even rapid change of an area. A good blend of all building uses is probably the right answer but this will be a recurring theme looking forwards that all town centres must balance.

Ed Thuell

Video showcases independent traders

Shoppers can look forward to a brand-new promotional video showcasing Bury St Edmunds' eclectic mix of independent retailers. Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District (BID) video will be used on the BID's marketing platforms to encourage shoppers to explore the many independent retailers across the town centre and will be accompanied by a content marketing campaign to drive people to the Independents Guide on the BID website at www.ourburystedmunds.com/independents/

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Culture and history at the Tower

In May, members enjoyed what may have been one of the Bury Society's most popular events, with a long waiting list: an all-day excursion to Layer Marney Tower, in Essex, for a relaxed day of history and culture, surrounded by beautiful Tudor architecture.

Layer Marney Tower was built in the 1520s by Henry, 1st Lord Marney, who was Lord Privy Seal to King Henry VIII and at the heart of early Tudor power.

In his position, Lord Marney was able to control access to Henry VIII, making him one of the most influential courtiers in the country.

Upon arrival, we enjoyed refreshments in the Long Gallery, before being free to explore the tower and gardens at our own pace in the morning. Despite ominous forecasts, the weather was very kind to us, and we enjoyed the beautiful formal gardens without the threat of rain, and quizzed the knowledgeable gardener about the plants, including the stunning Banksia Rose and neatly maintained Knot Garden.

We were also invited to climb the 80 foot gatehouse, visiting the amazing Doll's House Room – with its 18-roomed Manderley house – on the way up, before emerging onto the flat roof, with magnificent views across the Blackwater Estuary and the North Sea.

After a convivial lunch, we were given a tour of the private rooms of the house and the neighbouring church by owner Sheila Carrington. The medieval church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, is a fascinating building, featuring the tombs of both Henry, 1st Lord Marney, and his son John, 2nd Lord Marney, who died in 1523 and 1525 respectively, as well as a huge wall painting of St Christopher.

Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

The deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, November 24.

You can email copy to the editor at russell.cook461@btinternet.com



Layer Marney Tower, in Essex, the venue for an excursion in May.

Thanks to Sheila and the attentive team at Layer Marney Tower, as well as our coach driver Lewis from St Edmunds Travel, we all had a very pleasant day discovering this local historical gem.

Samuel Saloway-Cooke

Programme of upcoming events

Saturday, July 26: Talk on the Battle of Fornham in 1173 by Dr Mike Walker, at the Bury St Edmunds Guildhall, 10.30 to noon.

Thursday, August 21: Full-day excursion to historic Harwich, in Essex. Tickets available online; see details and booking form enclosed.

Saturday, October 18: Autumn Coffee Morning, at the United Reformed Church on Whiting Street (TBC), 10.30am to noon.

Keep an eye on the events webpage (burysociety.com/events) for more information and to book.

Don't miss the opportunity to add your weight to the Bury Society team. Apply for membership now.

Either use the website: theburysociety.org.uk to download a membership form from the Home Page by clicking the "Join Us" panel or telephone the membership secretary Sue Savage on 01284 719243.

Contributions to the Review are welcomed and used accordingly but they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bury Society.